

# **Use of Low Cost Personal Robots for the Encouragement, Demonstration and Assessment of Physical Activities**

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## **DECLARATION**

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work, which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution. To the best of my knowledge the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

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Thitipong Nandhabiwat

## ABSTRACT

One of the biggest challenges today is the issue of an overweight population. The issue is expected to impose tremendous pressure on the economic and financial health of a nation. The problem is now affecting developed and developing countries alike. In countries such as the USA and Australia, it has been reported that over 50% of the adult population are now either overweight or obese and the situation is expected to get worse. In developing countries like China, India and Thailand, similar problem is also emerging and in particular among the younger generation who has been exposed to wide varieties of processed or “junk” food. Apart from dietary and genetic reasons, the root cause of the weight problem is *lacking of physical activities*. With the increasing choices of indoor entertainment and transport facilities, in particular private cars, adult and children are now on average burning less daily calories while consuming more food loaded with high levels of sugar and fat. One way to combat the issue is to encourage more physical activities through games or exercises. However, this could be a two-edged sword as injuries have been reported due to inappropriate practices of exercises such as yoga without the advice of formal trainers or instructors. Hence, it is the aim of this study to investigate and develop low cost personal robots for the encouragement, demonstration and assessment of physical activities, with an objective to improve the overall health of the population. Most robotic researches so far have yet to focus on the low-cost off-the-shelf robots. This research is therefore one of the few that focuses on this category of robots. This study also investigates the opportunities and potential with the low-cost off-the-shelf robots and how to develop them beyond their default

capability. This research has illustrated the feasibility of using low cost personal robots as a supplement to help or assist people of all ages in various kinds of physical exercises during their leisure time in a home environment. In this study, Thai school children have been motivated to learn or practice traditional Thai dances with the robots. This is not just for the sake of physical activities, but it also helps to preserve the culture and traditions among the future generation in Thailand.

The initial phase of the research has been a literature review on the backgrounds of robots, robotic applications, and human-robot interaction (HRI) as an emerged discipline. The thesis also describes two low cost robots, the WowWee Robosapien Media and the Speecys SPC-101C, used in this research. The research has demonstrated on their use as a trainer for the purposes of education, entertainment and training. Four categories of routines including Thai dance, yoga, cheerleading dance, and exercises for the elderly have been used as examples of physical exercises. Discussion on dance robots, entertainment robots and Thai dances have also been covered in this thesis.

Another finding of the research is a demonstration of the assessment of a human subject's movements by a robot. While most people are trained or learn from human trainers, this approach has its limitations due to cost and the number of trainees at any one time. While it is possible to learn from media such as television, Internet, CD or DVD, the trainees will not be able to get any feedback or assistance and this has been the main cause of the injuries. The study proves that a robot is capable to provide demonstration in three dimension as well as providing feedback, it can also be used to assess the movements of the human subject through image or video

processing and measurement. In this project, customized software has been developed to control the robot and two web cameras have been used to provide monitoring and capturing of the human movements for assessment and feedback.

Outcome from this study has demonstrated that the two low-cost off-the-shelf humanoid robots used in this research are capable of assisting and enhancing the performance, enjoyment, and motivation of the participants through interactive activities with the robots. The performance of the participants attended the training session was positively improved through training and the improvement is demonstrated through pre-test and post-test assessments. In this thesis, detailed results of the study are reported and future research works are also discussed.

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## LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

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- [5] T. Nandhabiwat and C. C. Fung. “An Analysis of Two Low Cost Humanoid Robots for the Demonstration of Thai Folk Dances,” in the *Proceeding of the 9<sup>th</sup> Electrical Engineering and Computing Symposium (PEECS 2008)*, Western Australia: University of Western Australia, 2008, pp. 171-175.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>DECLARATION</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>LIST OF PUBLICATION</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	<b>xiv</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	<b>xv</b>
<b>LIST OF ACRONYMS</b>	<b>xix</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background of the Research	1
1.2 Research Problems and Questions	7
1.3 Research Objectives	8
1.4 Organization of the Thesis	8
<b>CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	<b>10</b>
2.1 Robot	10
2.1.1 History and Evolution of Robots	10
2.1.2 Robot Applications	18
2.1.2.1 Exploration	18
2.1.2.2 Industry	19

2.1.2.3	Medicine	20
2.1.2.4	Military and Police	21
2.1.2.5	Entertainment and Service	23
2.1.2.6	Toys	27
2.1.3	Human-Robot Interaction (HRI)	29
2.1.4	Human-Robot Social Interaction (HRSI)	34
2.2	Dance	42
2.2.1	Dance Robots	42
2.2.2	Thai Dance	46
2.3	Entertainment Robots	49
2.4	WowWee and Robosapien Media	50
2.4.1	History of WowWee	50
2.4.2	Robosapien: Why Robosapien Media?	52
2.5	Speecys and SPC-101C	55
2.5.1	History of Speecys	55
2.5.2	Why Speecys SPC-101C?	56
2.6	Comparison of SPC-101C and RS Media	59
2.7	Physical Movements	61
2.8	Image Processing	63
2.9	Learning Theories	67
 <b>CHAPTER 3     RESEARCH STUDY</b>		 <b>72</b>
3.1	The Scope of Research	72
3.2	Research Planning and Methodology	74
3.2.1	Research Phases	75

3.2.2 Procedure	75
3.2.3 Assessment	76
3.3 The Application of Robosapien Media	77
3.4 The Application of Speecys	78
<b>CHAPTER 4     DEVELOPMENT AND MEASUREMENTS</b>	<b>80</b>
4.1 Software Design and Development	80
4.1.1 Structure Computation	81
4.1.1.1 Epipolar Geometry	81
4.1.1.2 Stereo Calibration	84
4.1.2 Color Detection	88
4.1.3 Correlation Between Robot Joints and Human Joints	93
4.1.4 Software Development	96
4.2 Implementation	97
4.2.1 Development of Thai Dance by iThaiSTAR	97
4.2.2 Development of Cheerleading Dance by iCHEER	100
4.2.3 Development of Yoga Exercises by iCHEER	102
4.2.3.1 Sitting Pose	102
4.2.3.2 Plane Pose	103
4.2.3.3 One Leg Pose	103
4.2.3.4 Mountain Pose	104
4.2.3.5 Forward Bend Pose	105
4.2.3.6 Dog and Cat Pose	105
4.2.3.7 Cobra Pose	106
4.2.3.8 Corpse Pose	107

4.2.3.9	Chaturanga Pose	108
4.2.3.10	Chair Pose	109
4.2.4	Development of Elderly Exercises by iCHEER	109
4.2.4.1	Arm Raise	110
4.2.4.2	Chair Stand	110
4.2.4.3	Bicep Curl	111
4.2.4.4	Shoulder Flexion	111
4.2.4.5	Knee Flexion	112
4.2.4.6	Hip Flexion	112
4.2.4.7	Hip Extension	113
4.2.4.8	Alternative Hamstring Stretch	114
4.2.4.9	Wrist Stretch	114
4.2.5	Camera Calibration Matrix	115
4.2.6	Projection Matrix	116
4.2.7	Camera Rotation and Translation	116
4.2.8	Linear Triangulation Method	117
4.3	Outcome and Evaluation	118
4.3.1	Initial Indication of Response	118
4.3.2	Evaluation	120
<b>CHAPTER 5</b>	<b>RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS</b>	<b>121</b>
5.1	Results and Discussions	121
5.2	Problems and Limitations	122
5.3	Current Achievement	123
5.4	Plans for Future Work	123

<b>CHAPTER 6</b>	<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>125</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b>		<b>127</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>		<b>140</b>
Appendix A:	Codes of iCHEER Control Center	140
Appendix B:	Codes of iCHEER Color Tracking	158
Appendix C:	Codes for Cameras Calibration	174
Appendix D:	Codes for iThaiSTAR Thai Dance Routine	180
Appendix E:	Public Exposure of iThaiSTAR and iCHEER	202

## LIST OF TABLES

- Table 2.1: Examples of roles and proximity patterns that arise in major application domains.
- Table 4.1: Age distribution of respondents who returned the forms.
- Table 4.2: Gender Distribution.
- Table 4.3: Answers on “Is this the first time you see a dance robot?”
- Table 4.4: Impression on the Dance Robot.
- Table 4.5: Preference of Robot verses a Dog.
- Table 4.6: Answer to question, “Would you like to have a robot in your house?”
- Table 5.1 Main Movement Comparison: RS Media vs SPC-101C.

## LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure 2.1: Bristol tortoise.
- Figure 2.2: Shakey.
- Figure 2.3: General Electric Walking Truck.
- Figure 2.4: Unimate Robot.
- Figure 2.5: Isaac Asimov and Joe Engleberger.
- Figure 2.6: “*QRIO*”, small biped entertainment robot, formerly known as SDR (Sony Dream Robot, SDR-4X II).
- Figure 2.7: “*HOAP-3*” in action.
- Figure 2.8: “*ASIMO*” in action.
- Figure 2.9: Toyota Trumpet Playing Humanoid Robot.
- Figure 2.10: “*Odyssey IIb*” and “*Sojourner*” exploration robots.
- Figure 2.11: Industrial robots spot weld automobile bodies on an assembly line.
- Figure 2.12: “*ROBO DOC*” used in medical operation.
- Figure 2.13: Campbell Aird, Scottish hotel owner, fitted with the world's first bionic arm.
- Figure 2.14: Miniature Emergency Response Vehicle (MERV), police remote control bomb-disposal robot.
- Figure 2.15: “*Cypher*”, remote control helicopter for military surveillance 6 feet in diameter with 50 mile range.
- Figure 2.16: “*BEAR*”, a life-size humanoid robot that will search for and rescue people.
- Figure 2.17: “*Gort*” from the movie “*The Day The Earth Stood Still*”

- Figure 2.18: Keepon dancing with a child.
- Figure 2.19: Augmented Robosapiens playing soccer at RoboCup German Open 2005.
- Figure 2.20: Cleanmate 365 QQ-2, a robotic vacuum cleaner.
- Figure 2.21: MIT Postdoctoral associate Aaron Edsinger puts objects in a box held out to him by robot Domo.
- Figure 2.22: Furby in different color.
- Figure 2.23: LEGO Mindstorms NXT.
- Figure 2.24: Cobalt Blue “Aibo”.
- Figure 2.25: Framework for classifying social robots.
- Figure 2.26: Comparison between the robot dance motions developed by researchers and those developed by the dancer.
- Figure 2.27: A ballroom dancing robot “*MS DanceR*”.
- Figure 2.28: The 1.5-meter-tall robot “*HRP-2 Promet*”.
- Figure 2.29: QRIO danced with kids.
- Figure 2.30: Examples of Thai classical dance forms.
- Figure 2.31: Examples of Thai folk-dance forms.
- Figure 2.32: WowWee’s mass produced toys.
- Figure 2.33: Mark Tilden posed with Robosapien Media and Roboraptor.
- Figure 2.34: Futaba RBT-1, a flexible 1-foot robot that does all the moves.
- Figure 2.35: Robosapien Media with lying down sequences.
- Figure 2.36: Speecy SPC-101C.
- Figure 2.37: Control of SPC-101C.
- Figure 2.38: RS Media and SPC-101C demonstrate an arm movement.
- Figure 2.39: Image Processing.



- Figure 3.1: Phases of this research project.
- Figure 3.2: Conceptualization of the proposed research approach.
- Figure 3.3: RS Media dances with a school kid.
- Figure 4.1: Real-time Image Processing of iCHEER
- Figure 4.2: Epipolar Geometry.
- Figure 4.3: Overview Program work flow.
- Figure 4.4: Two images are captured from left and right cameras at the same time.
- Figure 4.5: Current status on 3D reconstruction and program for image capture from two webcam is achieved.
- Figure 4.6: Color Object Tracking.
- Figure 4.7: MS Visual Studio Software on Colour Tracking.
- Figure 4.8: Simulation of Real-time Image Processing of Human to Point Cloud.
- Figure 4.9: Moving Horizontal Axis to the Left.
- Figure 4.10: Horizontal Axis is on the Left.
- Figure 4.11: Simulation Movement of the Human's Right Foot.
- Figure 4.12: Simulation Movement of Human's Right Hand.
- Figure 4.13: Mean-Shift Algorithm.
- Figure 4.14: Human Joints.
- Figure 4.15: Human Joints Structure.
- Figure 4.16: Robot Joints.
- Figure 4.17: Main movements of "*Tar Sod Soi Ma La*".
- Figure 4.18: Main movements of "*Tar Ram Sai*".
- Figure 4.19: iCHEER Control Center.
- Figure 4.20: iCHEER Demonstrated "Sitting Pose".
- Figure 4.21: iCHEER Demonstrated "Plane Pose".

- Figure 4.22: iCHEER Demonstrated “One Leg Pose”.
- Figure 4.23: iCHEER Demonstrated “Mountain Pose”.
- Figure 4.24: iCHEER Demonstrated “Forward Bend Pose”.
- Figure 4.25: iCHEER Demonstrated “Dog and Cat Pose”.
- Figure 4.26: iCHEER Demonstrated “Cobra Pose”.
- Figure 4.27: iCHEER Demonstrated “Corpse Pose”.
- Figure 4.28: iCHEER Demonstrated “Chaturanga Pose”.
- Figure 4.29: iCHEER Demonstrated “Chair Pose”.
- Figure 4.30: iCHEER Demonstrated Arm Raise.
- Figure 4.31: iCHEER Demonstrated Chair Stand.
- Figure 4.32: iCHEER Demonstrated Bicep Curl.
- Figure 4.33: iCHEER Demonstrated Shoulder Flexion.
- Figure 4.34: iCHEER Demonstrated Knee Flexion.
- Figure 4.35: iCHEER Demonstrated Hip Flexion.
- Figure 4.36: iCHEER Demonstrated Hip Extension.
- Figure 4.37: iCHEER Demonstrated Alternative Hamstring Stretch.
- Figure 4.38: iCHEER Demonstrated Wrist Stretch.
- Figure 4.39: Perspective.

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>2D</b>	2 Dimensional
<b>3D</b>	3 Dimensional
<b>AC/DC</b>	Alternate Current / Direct Current
<b>ASIMO</b>	Advanced Step in Innovative Mobility
<b>BEAR</b>	Battlefield Extraction-Assist Robot
<b>CLDC</b>	Connected Limited Device Configuration
<b>CCD</b>	Charge Coupled Device
<b>COM</b>	Center of Mass
<b>COP</b>	Center of Projection
<b>CT</b>	Computed Tomography
<b>DOF</b>	Degrees of Freedom
<b>GB</b>	Gigabyte
<b>HCI</b>	Human-Computer Interaction
<b>HOAP-3</b>	Humanoid Open Architecture Platform-3
<b>HRI</b>	Human-Robot Interaction
<b>HRP-2</b>	Humanoid Robotics Project-2
<b>IR</b>	Infrared
<b>iThaiSTAR</b>	intelligent Thai Sanook Training-Assist Robot
<b>iCHEER</b>	intelligent Companion Humanoid Entertainment and Education Robot
<b>J2ME</b>	Java 2 Micro Edition
<b>JRE</b>	Java Runtime Environment

<b>JSR</b>	Java Specification Request
<b>JTWI</b>	Java Technology for the Wireless Industry
<b>KMUTT</b>	King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi
<b>LCD</b>	Liquid Crystal Display
<b>MB</b>	Megabyte
<b>MERV</b>	Miniature Emergency Response Vehicle
<b>MIDP</b>	Mobile Information Device Profile
<b>MIT</b>	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
<b>MP3</b>	MPEG-1 Audio Layer 3
<b>MP4</b>	Moving Picture Experts Group 4
<b>MS DanceR</b>	Mobile Smart Dance Robot
<b>NASA</b>	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
<b>QRIO</b>	Quest for Curiosity
<b>RS</b>	Robosapien
<b>RSU</b>	Rangsit University
<b>R.U.R.</b>	Rossum's Universal Robots
<b>SD</b>	Secure Digital
<b>SDK</b>	Software Development Kit
<b>SDR</b>	Sony Dream Robot
<b>SE</b>	Standard Edition
<b>SPECT</b>	Single-Photon Emission Computed Tomography
<b>UV</b>	Ultraviolet